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THE PRETENDED DISCOVERY OF THE SOURCE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

BY

CAPT. WILLARD GLAZIER.*

Editor's Note.—This paper was read before the Congrès at Berne, on the 12th of August, 1891, by Mr. Francis A. Stout, Vice-President of the American Geographical Society, and was referred to a Committee, composed of Sir George Bowen, Maj. Post, U. S. A., Messrs. Napoléon Ney, A. de Claparède and E. v. Hesse-Wartegg. The Committee reported, August 13, that Captain Glazier's claim was without foundation, and that the sources of the Mississippi were discovered by Schoolcraft, Lieutenant Allen and Nicollet.

It is proposed to state Capt. Willard Glazier's claim to the discovery of the true source of the Mississippi River; to recall with brevity the historical facts as to the real discovery; to show the character of Captain Glazier's pretended exploration; and to ask of the Congrès International des Sciences Géographiques such an expression of opinion as may establish the truth.

Captain Glazier's claim was first made known by the following letter (published, with the map to which it refers, in the *Proceedings* of the Royal Geographical Society of London, Vol. VII. (1885), pp. 23-25):

“The true source of the Mississippi has been a vexed question among American geographers for some time,

*The name Willard Glazier is not to be found in the U. S. Army Register, nor in the List of Officers of Volunteers, 1861-1865, in the records of the War Department, nor in the U. S. Navy Register.

the country around its head waters being in a very wild condition, inhabited only by Indians, and access to it difficult of accomplishment. In June, 1881, I organized and led an expedition with the object of settling forever the question of the source of our great river.

"We proceeded in canoes viâ Leech Lake to Lake Itasca, and accompanied by an old Indian guide, pushed forward to the south, and were rewarded by the discovery of another lake of considerable size, which proves to be, without the shadow of a doubt, the true source of the Mississippi, in lat. $47^{\circ} 13' 25''$. From notes taken during the ascent, it cannot be less than three feet above Lake Itasca—the hitherto supposed source of the river.

"The Mississippi may, therefore, be said to originate in an altitude 1,578 feet above the Atlantic Ocean. Its length, taking former data as the basis, may be placed at 3,184 miles. The origin of the river in the remote and unfrequented region of country between Leech Lake and Red River, not less than an entire degree of latitude south of Turtle Lake, which was for many years regarded as the source, throws both forks of the stream out of the usual route of the fur trade, and furnishes, perhaps, the best reason why its head has remained so long in enveloped in obscurity.

"I take the liberty of enclosing herewith a map showing my route and the true source of the Mississippi.

"MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, June 17th, 1884.

"*To the Secretary, Royal Geographical Society.*"

The letter as printed in the *Proceedings*, is without signature, but has the heading :

"*Discovery of the True Source of the Mississippi.*

By Captain WILLARD GLAZIER (U.S.)."

It does not appear that Captain Glazier's letter was introduced, or supported by the authority of any person known to the Royal Geographical Society. He threw himself, unknown as he was, upon the generosity of the Society, and was received with large hospitality.

The historical facts with regard to the real discovery of the source of the Mississippi were admirably stated by Mr. Russell Hinman of Cincinnati, Ohio, in a communication to the New York journal, *Science*, Vol. 8 (1886), pp. 142-145; and more at length by Mr. Henry D. Harrower of New York, in a pamphlet, published in October, 1886. The record is as follows:

The earliest exploration beyond Cass Lake (which lies N. E. of Lake Itasca) was made by Henry R. Schoolcraft in 1832, under authority of the War Department. Schoolcraft made an official report on the 1st of September, 1832, and published in 1834 the narrative of his expedition, with a map, compiled by Lieutenant Allen. On this map Lake Itasca is laid down as the source of the Mississippi, and on p. 58 of the *Narrative* is the passage: "The outlet of Itasca Lake is perhaps ten to twelve feet broad, with an apparent depth of twelve to eighteen inches. The discharge of water appears to be copious, compared to its inlet." This inlet, leading from a smaller lake to the south of Itasca, is indicated on the map.

Four years after Schoolcraft, (in 1836) Mr. J. N. Nicollet* made an instrumental exploration of this region. His report and map were published by the

* Mr. Nicollet was a native of Chambéry, Savoy. He was a trained scientist, who had worked with Laplace and had filled the chair of mathematics in the Collège Louis-le-Grand.

U. S. Bureau of Topographical Engineers as "Senate document No. 237, 26th Congress, 2d Session, 1843." In this report he says (pp. 57-59): "There are five creeks that fall into it (Lake Itasca), formed by innumerable streamlets oozing from the clay beds at the bases of the hills . . . known here by the name of 'heights of land.' . . . These are the waters which I consider to be the utmost sources of the Mississippi. Now, of the five creeks that empty into Itasca Lake, one empties into the east bay of the lake, the four others into the west bay. *I visited the whole of them*; and, among the latter there is one remarkable above the others, inasmuch as its course is longer, and its waters more abundant; so that, in obedience to the geographical rule 'that the sources of a river are those which are most distant from its mouth,' this creek is truly the infant Mississippi. The day on which I explored this principal creek (August 29, 1836) I judged that, at its entrance into Itasca Lake, its bed was from 15 to 20 feet wide and the depth of water from 2 to 3 feet. . . . After having devoted three days to an exploration of the sources of the Mississippi, and spent portions of the nights in making astronomical observations, I took leave of Itasca Lake. . . . The honor of having first explored the sources of the Mississippi, and of introducing a knowledge of them into physical geography, belongs to Mr. Schoolcraft and Lieutenant Allen. I come only after these gentlemen; but I may be permitted to claim some merit for having completed what was wanting for a full geographical account of these sources. Moreover, I am, I believe, the first traveller who has carried with him astronomical instruments, and put them to

profitable account along the whole course of the Mississippi from its mouth to its sources." On pp. 124-125 of his Report Nicollet gives his determinations of the geodetic position and the elevation of the region. He places Schoolcraft's Island, in Lake Itasca, in N. Lat. $47^{\circ} 13' 35''$ and W. Long. (from Greenwich) $95^{\circ} 2'$. The elevation of the island is 1,575 feet above the level of the Gulf of Mexico; and, in Nicollet's own words, "the utmost sources of the Mississippi, at the summit of the height of land six miles south of Lake Itasca," have an elevation of 1,680 feet above the Gulf.

Nicollet finished the work he undertook to do. He explored and described and mapped the sources of the Mississippi, from the rills that trickled down the Height of Land to collect in Lake Itasca to the lake itself, and the River Mississippi that flowed from it. Every later exploration by competent men has confirmed the authority of his survey. He bestowed no name; but in 1879 the engineers, who subdivided the district into one-mile sections under the orders of the U. S. Land Office, gave to one of the lakelets formed by the widening of the creek, which Nicollet described as the longest of the four on the west, the locally-known name of Elk Lake. The U. S. Land Office Map of Minnesota, issued in 1879, shows Elk Lake a little to the south of Lake Itasca.

These are the facts concerning the discovery of the sources of the Mississippi.

Captain Glazier states in his letter to the Royal Geographical Society that he made his expedition in June, 1881, but he does not add that he took with him a copy of the Land Office Map. In the detailed account of

his trip, published in 1884, the *American Meteorological Journal* (Vol. I.), of Detroit, Mich., he unwarily fixed the position of Lake Glazier (Elk Lake) in N. Lat. $47^{\circ} 13' 25''$, its height above sea level at 1,578 feet, and its distance from the sea at 3,184 miles.

Mr. Russell Hinman showed, in his communication to *Science* (in 1886), that Captain Glazier's latitude of Lake Glazier is only 10 seconds less than the latitude of Schoolcraft's Island, in Lake Itasca, as determined by Nicollet ; that this difference of 10 seconds is equal to 1,013 feet, 3 inches, the degree of latitude between $46^{\circ} 30'$ and $47^{\circ} 30'$ N., measuring, according to the U. S. Coast Survey Report, 1884, 69.079 miles ; and that the pretended latitude of Lake Glazier places it actually *within* Lake Itasca.

Mr. Hinman showed also that the "Meteorological Observations at the head waters of the Mississippi," from July 17 to August 2, published by Captain Glazier as his own (*Am. Meteorological Journal*, Vol. I., p. 328), were copied, word for word and figure for figure, from a table of observations made by Schoolcraft in 1820 (see Schoolcraft's *Narrative*, ed. 1855, p. 423).

These exposures of his method put Captain Glazier upon his guard. He has never since made a precise statement ; and his thick volume, entitled *Down the Great River*, published at Philadelphia in 1887, while it professes to give an account of the "Discovery," is wholly taken up with trivial adventures and descriptions.

In one word, Captain Glazier discovered nothing ; but by persistent self-assertion and the help of serviceable publishers, he succeeded in imposing his Lake

Glazier upon the people to such an extent that it became necessary for the Legislature of the State of Minnesota to pass the following Act :

CHAPTER 69.

H. F. NO. 702.—AN ACT TO FIX THE NAME OF A LAKE
FORMERLY KNOWN AS ELK LAKE.

Be it Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota :

SECTION 1. That the lake known for many years to the Indians and early explorers as Elk Lake, situated in Beltrami county, in section twenty-two (22) of town one hundred forty-three (143) north, range thirty-six (36) west, fifth principal meridian, shall be known and designated hereafter on all official maps of the State and named in all county and State records referring to the same, as "Elk Lake."

SEC. 2. No edition of any school geography, published subsequent to January one, eighteen hundred and ninety, which contains any map giving any name to the lake specified in section one other than "Elk Lake," shall be used in the schools of this State.

SEC. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

Approved April 24, 1889.

In the same year the Minnesota Historical Society, of St. Paul, commissioned Mr. J. V. Brower, with a party of engineers and assistants, to make a minute topographical and hydrographical survey of the Itasca basin. The work has been accomplished, but the report has not yet appeared in print.

It is under a sense of duty to all honorable workers in the field of science that the American Geographical

Society submits to the Congrès International the foregoing history of a pretended exploration by a man, of whom it must be affirmed, on the evidence of his own writings, that he never saw the head waters of the Mississippi.

GEO. C. HURLBUT,
Librarian.

NEW YORK, March 15, 1891.

DETAILED HYDROGRAPHIC CHART
OF THE
ULTIMATE SOURCE
OF THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER

DRAWN BY

J. V. BROWER,

A COMMISSIONER,

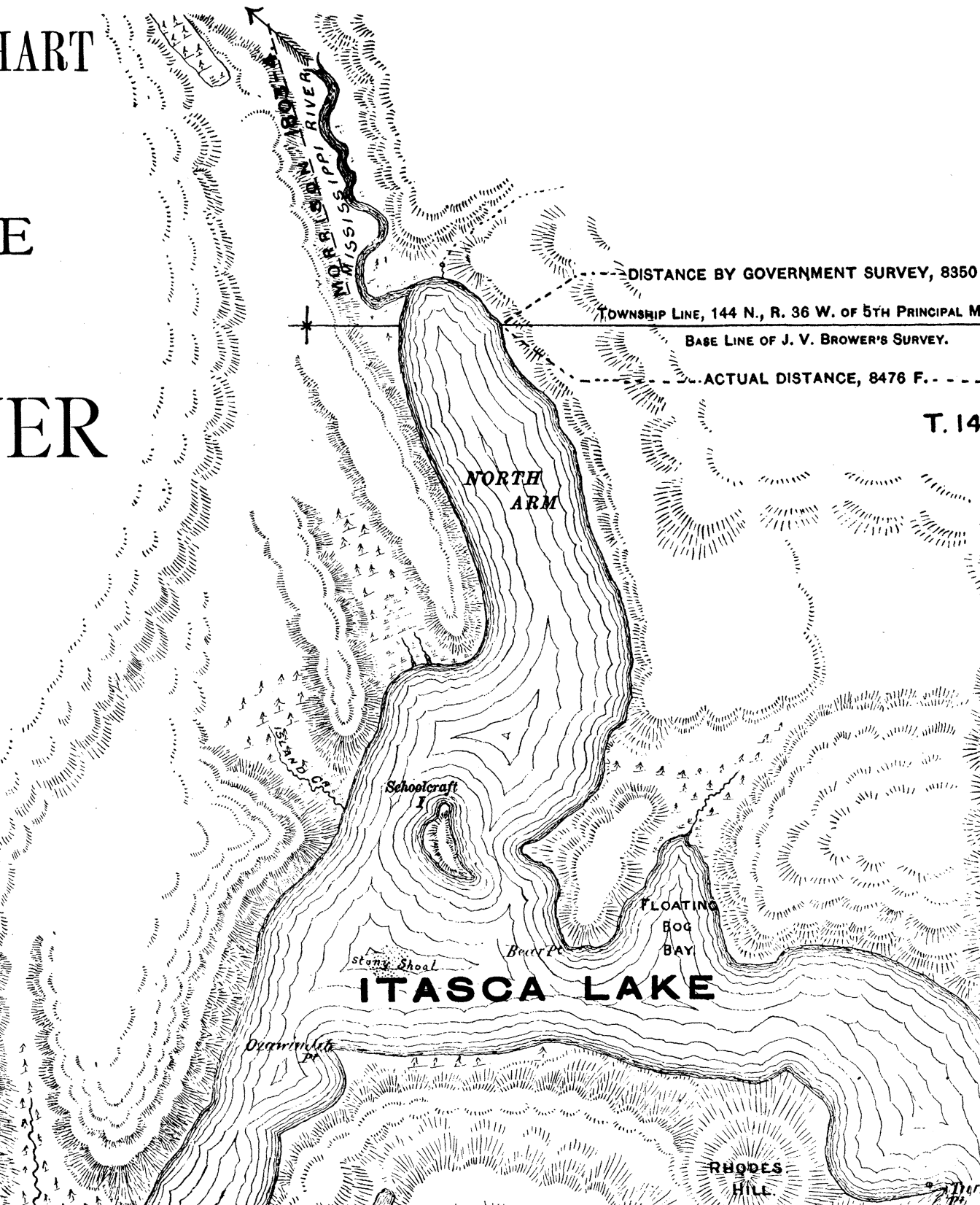
IN CHARGE OF AN EXPEDITIONARY EXAMINATION, CONDUCTED UNDER
THE AUTHORITY OF THE MINNESOTA STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, DURING THE YEAR 1889 AND THERE-
AFTER, AND ALSO COMMISSIONER OF
THE ITASCA STATE PARK.

1891.

SCALE: Three inches to each statute mile of five thousand
two hundred and eighty feet.



ART
E
ER



DISTANCE BY GOVERNMENT SURVEY, 8350

TOWNSHIP LINE, 144 N., R. 36 W. OF 5TH PRINCIPAL M.

BASE LINE OF J. V. BROWER'S SURVEY.

ACTUAL DISTANCE, 8476 F.

T. 14

NORTH
ARM

Schoolcraft
I.

Stony Shoal

Beaver Pt.

FLOATING
BOG
BAY

ITASCA LAKE

Deer Island

RHODES
HILL

GOVERNMENT SURVEY, 8350 F.

36 W. OF 5TH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN.

V. BROWER'S SURVEY.

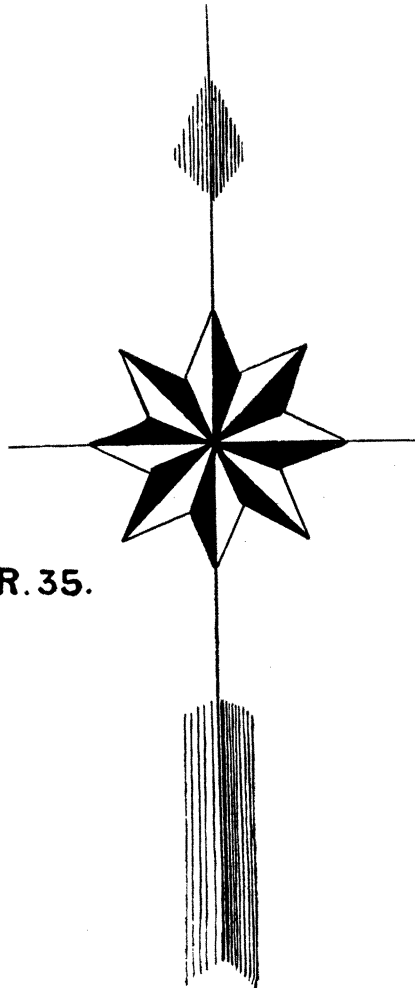
STANCE, 8476 F.

T. 143. R. 36

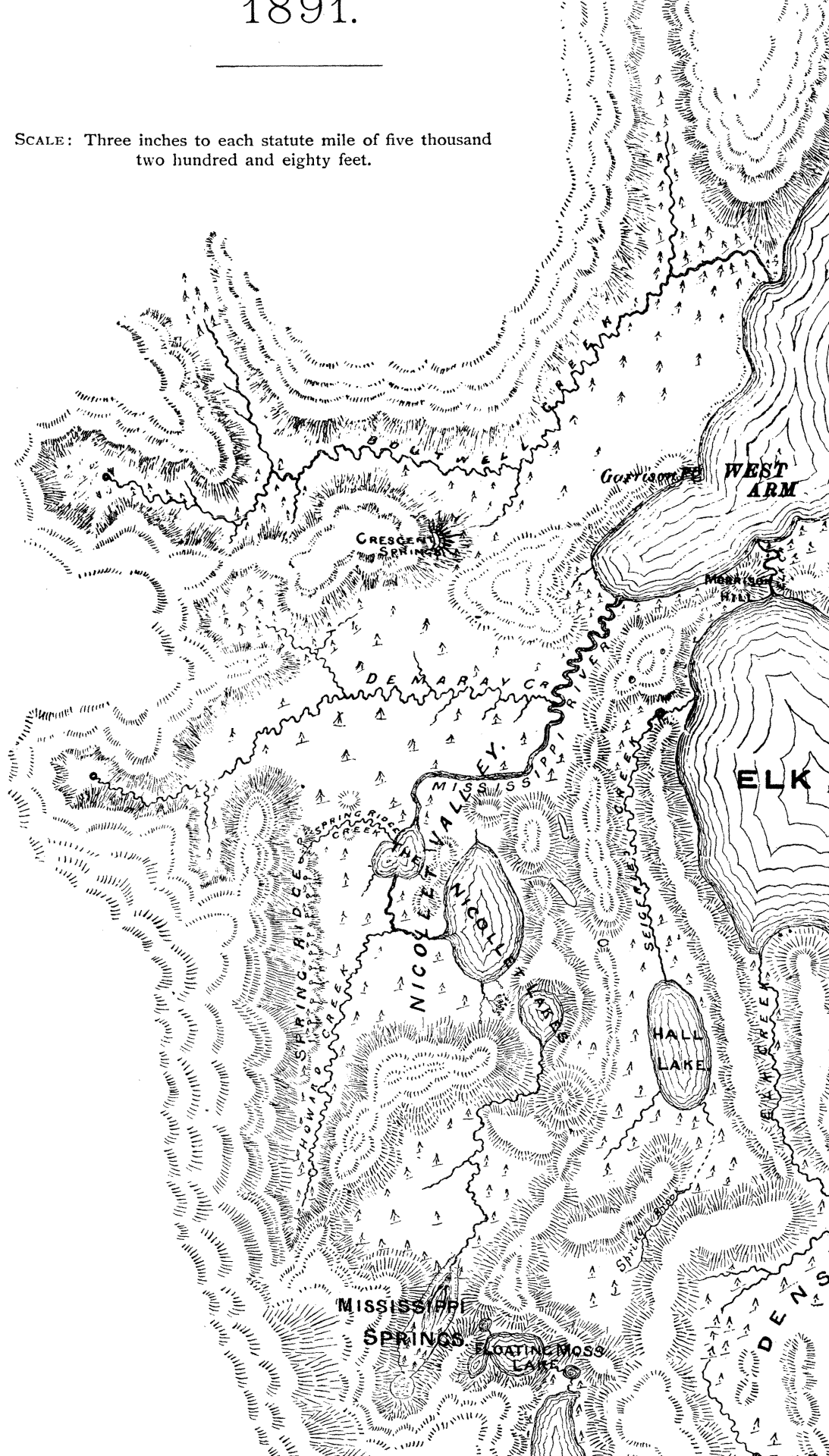
T. 144.
R. 35.

N. W.
CORNER
OF
HUBBARD
CO.

T. 143. R. 35.

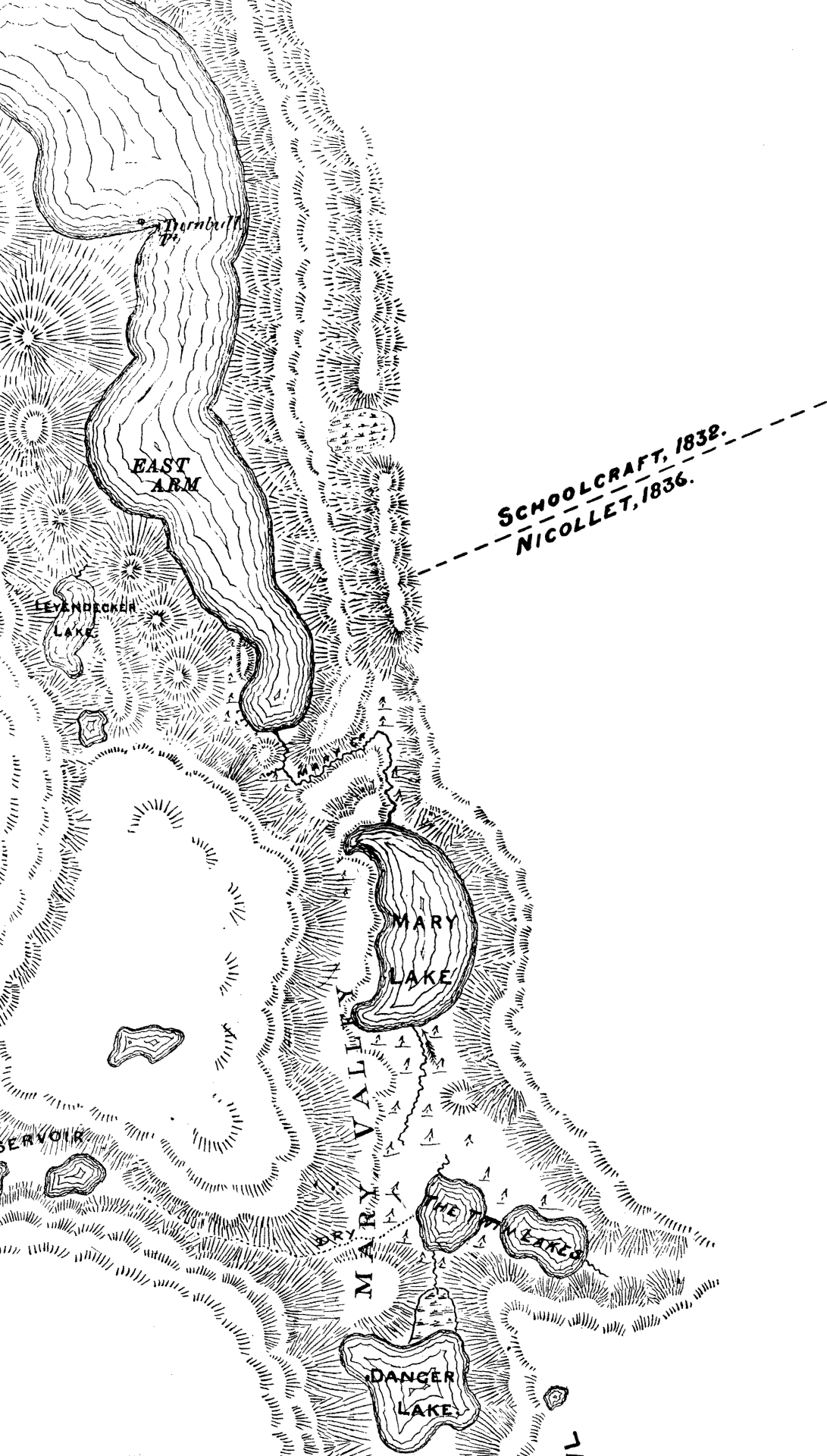


SCALE: Three inches to each statute mile of five thousand two hundred and eighty feet.



ITASCA LAKE





THE
GREATER
ULTIMATE
HAUTEURS

MISSISSIPPI
SPRINGS

FLOATING MOSS
LAKE

WHIPPLE
LAKE

THE
TRIPLE
LAKES

MORRISON

LAKE

HERNAND

SOTO

LAKE

Brower

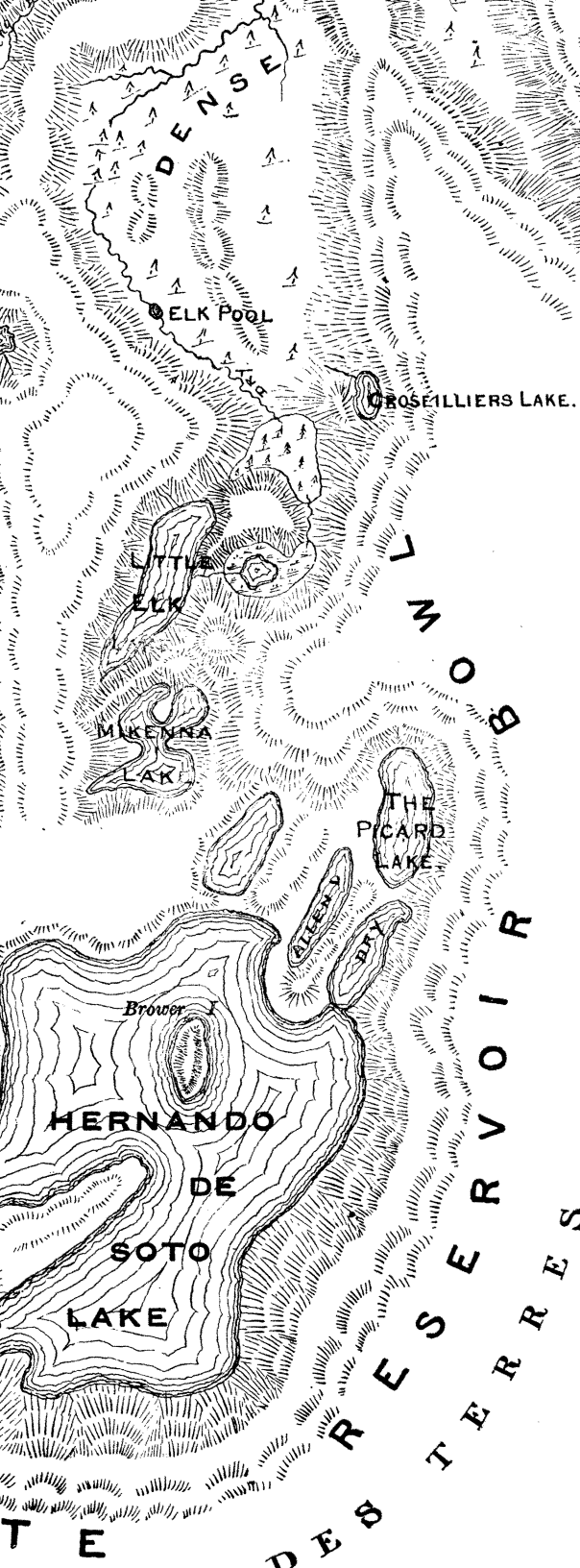
ELK PO

LITTLE
ELK

MIKENNA
LAKE

DENS





REFERENCES.

ALTITUDE ABOVE THE SEA.

LAKE ITASCA, ... 1,470 Feet

ALTITUDE ABOVE LAKE ITASCA.

MARY LAKE, ...	35 Feet
JOSEPHINE LAKE, ...	58 "
ELK LAKE, ...	1 Foot
NICOLLET'S LOWER LAKE, ...	3 Feet
" MIDDLE LAKE, ...	4 "
" UPPER LAKE, ...	39 "
MISSISSIPPI SPRINGS, ...	78 "
FLOATING MOSS LAKE, ...	91 "
WHIPPLE LAKE, ...	94 "
NORTH TRIPLET LAKE (at low water), ...	99 "
MORRISON AND HERNANDO DE SOTO LAKES (at low water), ...	101 "
SUMMIT OF HAUTEUR DE TERRE, SOUTH OF HERNANDO DE SOTO LAKE, ...	200 "

DISTANCES FROM THE GULF OF MEXICO, BY THE CHANNEL OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

TO OUTLET OF LAKE ITASCA, ...	2,546.52 Miles
" ELK LAKE, ...	2,549.90 "
" HEAD OF BOUTWELL CREEK, ...	2,550.74 "
" MARY LAKE, ...	2,551.50 "
" HEAD OF HOWARD CREEK, ...	2,552.02 "
" EXTREME LIMIT, LESSER ULTIMATE RESERVOIR, beyond Surface Channel, ...	2,553.07 "
" EXTREME LIMIT, GREATER ULTIMATE RESERVOIR, beyond Surface Channel, ...	2,555.25 "

DISCOVERIES AT THE SOURCE.

EARLIEST PROBABLE OCCUPANTS, ...	Prehistoric
EARLIEST KNOWN OCCUPANTS, ...	Aboriginal
FIRST KNOWN OF WHITE MEN, ...	William Morrison, 1858
FIRST AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY, Lake Itasca, ...	H. R. Schoolcraft, 1823
SECOND AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY, Principal Stream, ...	J. N. Nicollet, 1845
THIRD AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY, Elk Lake, ...	Julius Chambers, 1872
FOURTH AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY, United States Survey, ...	Edwin S. Hall, 1878
FIFTH AUTHENTIC DISCOVERY, Special Survey, ...	Hopewell Clarke, 1881

GEOGRAPHIC POSITION.

SCHOOLCRAFT ISLAND, {	North Latitude 47° 13' 10"
	Longitude West from G., 95° 12' 10"
BROWER ISLAND, ...	North Latitude 47° 8' 50"
	Longitude West from G., 95° 12' 48"

ANCES.

THE SEA.

. 1,470 Feet.

LAKE ITASCA.

. 35 Feet.
 58 "
 1 Foot.
 3 Feet.
 4 "
 39 "
 78 "
 91 "
 94 "
 99 "

(r),
 TO LAKES (at

OUTH OF HER-
 101 "
 200 "

GULF OF MEXICO, MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

. 2,546.52 Miles.
 2,549.90 "
 2,550.74 "
 2,551.50 "
 2,552.02 "
 ULTIMATE
 Channel, 2,553.07 "
 ULTIMATE
 Channel, 2,555.25 "

THE SOURCE.

. Prehistoric.
 Aboriginal.
 . William Morrison, 1803.
 ke . H. R. Schoolcraft, 1832.
 ci- . J. N. Nicollet, 1836.
 Elk . Julius Chambers, 1872.
 ed . Edwin S. Hall, 1875.
 ial . Hopewell Clarke, 1886.

SITION.

North Latitude 47° 13' 10".
 West from G., 95° 12'.
 North Latitude 47° 8' 50".
 West from G., 95° 12' 48".

